



**The County of San Luis Obispo**  
**2014 Employee Engagement and Needs Assessment Survey**

**Overall Results**

Prepared by:



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## Assessment Overview

In May 2014, The County of San Luis Obispo conducted an employee engagement and needs assessment survey to gain a better understanding of its workforce, so as to begin making any necessary adjustments to support employees in achieving the goals of their departments and ensure a positive and engaged workplace.

Employees responded to the survey over a three week period of time. Of the 2,419 employees, 1,532 responses were received, thus representing 63% of the County's workforce.

The response rates for each department are as follows:

Department/Unit	Number in Department/Unit	Number of Responses	Response Rate
County Administrative Office/Emergency Services	15	7	47%
Agricultural Commissioner/Weights and Measures	43	36	84%
Assessor's Office	78	54	69%
Auditor-Controller – Treasurer-Tax Collector – Public Administrator	62	38	61%
Child Support Services	37	28	76%
Clerk-Recorder	22	18	82%
County Counsel	19	12	63%
District Attorney	92	42	46%
Farm Advisor	6	5	83%
General Services Agency	225	106	47%
Health Agency	454	264	58%
Human Resources and Risk Management	27	27	100%
Library Services	75	48	64%
Planning and Building	88	67	76%
Probation	149	68	46%
Public Works	179	87	49%
Sheriff- Coroner	384	147	38%
Social Services	459	264	58%
Veterans Services	5	1	20%
Unidentified	–	213	14%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,419</b>	<b>1,532</b>	<b>63%</b>

\*To maintain anonymity, Veterans Services was not included in report

## Reading the Report

### Questions and Categories

In order to include opinions and perspectives from each County department, a robust process was conducted in selecting the survey questions. The consulting firm drafted an initial questionnaire based on research and best practices in government agencies. Then a committee, including representatives from each department, weighed in on the final questions and process for implementing the survey.

The survey consisted of 10 categories:

- My Job/Career
- Overall Satisfaction
- Training, Resources & Support
- Collaboration Between Teams/Depts.
- My Supervisor/Manager
- My Dept.'s Leadership Team
- County Leadership
- Your Work Environment
- Benefits/Compensation
- My Team

### Ratings

There are between two and eleven questions within each category. Data for each question is reported in MEAN scores – which is the average of all ratings received for the question. Each of the above 10 categories, then, received an average (MEAN) rating based on the average ratings for each of the questions within. The summary chart on page 8 showcases the average ratings for each **category** and provides a high level overview of where the higher and lower ratings occur.

The rating scale for each question was as follows:

1	2	3	4	5	6	
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree	N/A

### Executive Summary

The Executive Summary is intended to provide overall highlights that may be helpful in terms of where to focus for action planning and gaining additional insights.

### Open-Ended Questions

For each category that contained open-ended responses, the responses were categorized by theme to summarize meaningful insights. It is important to keep in mind that only a percentage of all respondents leave a comment and there is a higher likelihood for those with constructive feedback to leave the most commentary.

### Suggestions

In reading survey results it is a human tendency to look for areas to improve and gain insight on what is not going well. It is strongly advised to first look to the areas of strength – where are the highest ratings and most positive feedback. It is critical to build on strengths and celebrate accomplishments. The areas of opportunity should be read with an eye for inclusivity with the key question being “how can we involve everyone in the solution.”

## Executive Summary

Overall the ratings for the survey were very positive. Employees understand how their role connects to the bigger picture and the role they play in serving the community. They feel a strong focus on providing quality customer service and are clear on the goals and values of the County of San Luis Obispo. Most notably, job satisfaction scores were high. Nearly all respondents claim to have someone at work they consider to be a friend (a key indicator of engagement), would prefer to remain with the organization as opposed to going somewhere else, and would recommend working at the County of San Luis Obispo to a friend. The positive ratings indicate a strong foundation from which to build.

### Areas of Strength

#### **Work Environment**

The highest rated category was “Your Work Environment.” Employees seem to be very satisfied with their work environment, especially the safety and security provided to them as they perform their work duties. Additionally, they are aware of the County’s fire and safety procedures and feel that their workspace is conducive to delivering effective customer service. Safety is of the highest priority in any work environment and paramount to delivering effective customer service. The comments revealed some specific areas for improvement but in whole, the ratings were commendable.



#### **Overall Satisfaction**

Overall, employees are satisfied with their jobs; a large majority rated their job satisfaction as the same or better compared to 6 months ago, while only a small percentage felt their satisfaction decreased. Employees who have a friend at work are more likely to be engaged and it seems the vast majority of employees at the County do. Also on a positive note, a large majority would choose to remain at the County even if offered another job elsewhere and would even go to the extent of recommending the County to a friend as a place to work. These findings strongly imply that employees think highly of the County and want to be a part of its success.

### Areas of Opportunity

#### **My Department’s Leadership Team**

Department Leadership received lower ratings than the other categories; employees do not always feel their opinions are considered when changes are made that may affect them or that the department leadership team has their best interests at heart. Additionally and potentially connectedly, employees are experiencing lower morale across departments. If employees feel that their opinions are heard and incorporated, this will lead

them to feel that the leadership team is looking out for their betterment when final decisions are made. Overall, improvement in two-way communication will undoubtedly play a major role in heightening morale.

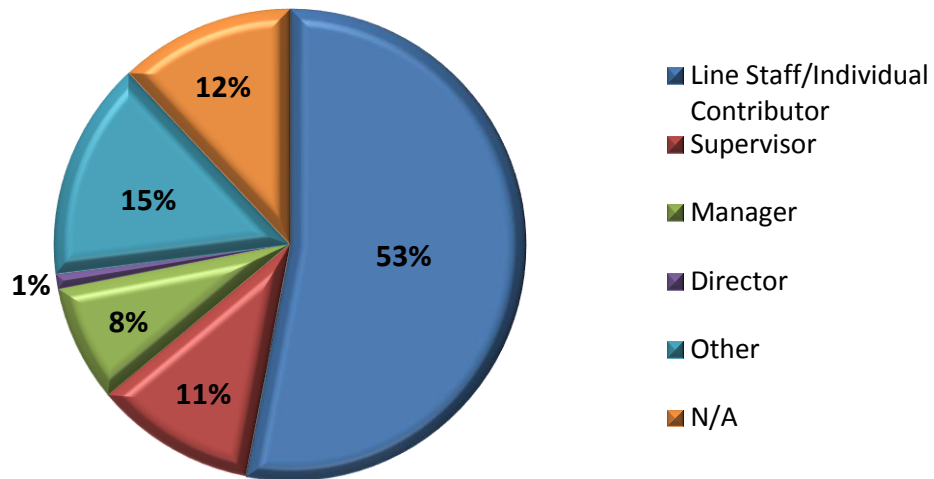


#### **Training, Resources & Support**

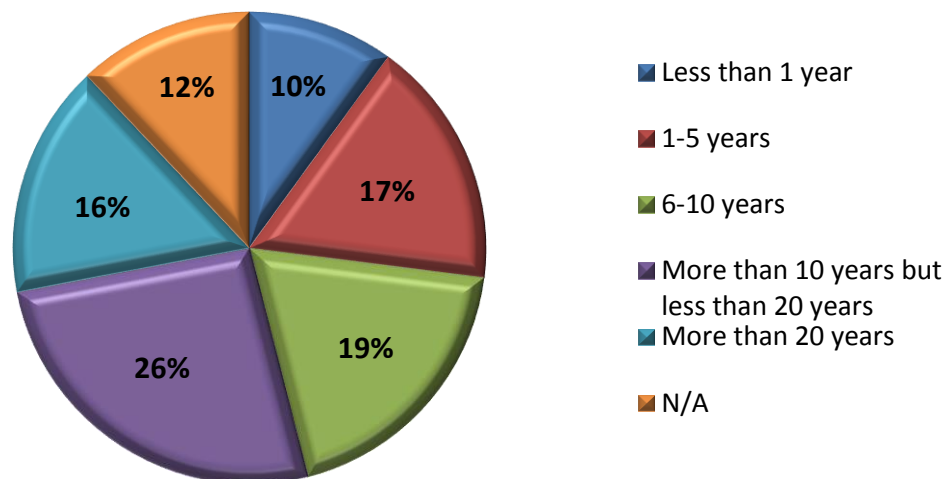
Employees are aware of, and have taken advantage of, the development opportunities available to them, but are not as satisfied with the current offerings. Employees desire job specific training that would help them perform their jobs and be beneficial to their individual departments. They need time and compensation from the County to take these types of trainings.

## Survey Demographics

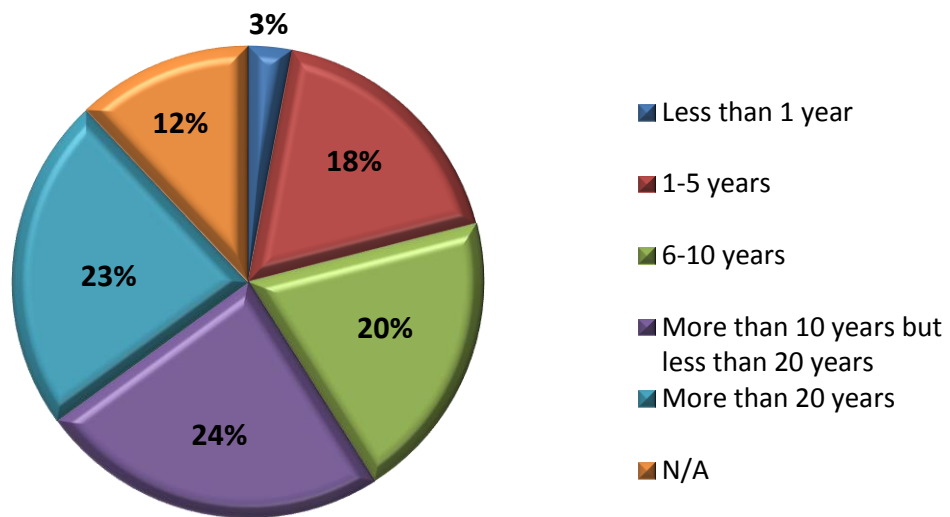
What description best describes your position?



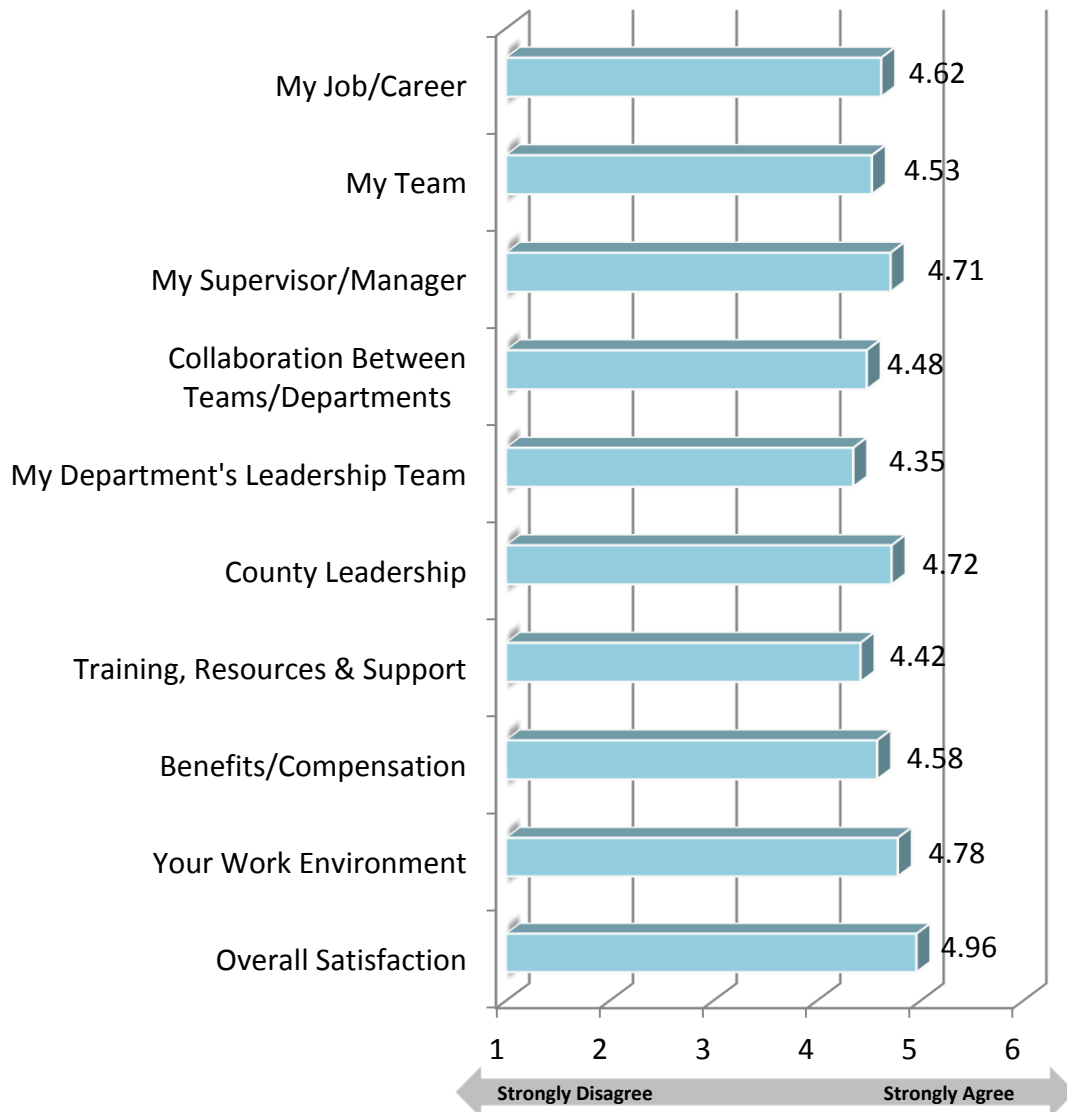
How long have you worked for San Luis Obispo County?



**In what timeframe might you likely retire from San Luis Obispo County?**



## Overall Category Averages



### Results Summary

Overall category averages reveal favorable ratings. Two categories stood out as strengths for the County: “Your Work Environment” and “Overall Satisfaction.” Possible areas for focus in terms of making improvements were “My Department’s Leadership Team” and “Training, Resources & Support.”



## My Job/Career

Average: 4.62



### Results Summary

In this category, employees feel they have a solid understanding of how their jobs contribute to the goals of the department; they see that their jobs are meaningful and serve a greater purpose. Furthermore, they feel they are held accountable to what is expected of them in their jobs. On the other hand, they do not feel there are opportunities for growth and thereby desire better developmental opportunities than what are currently offered.

## **My Job/Career**

### **Open-ended Comment Themes**

(Responses = 1,300; 85% of respondents left a comment)

#### **What additional resources would help you be more effective in your job?**

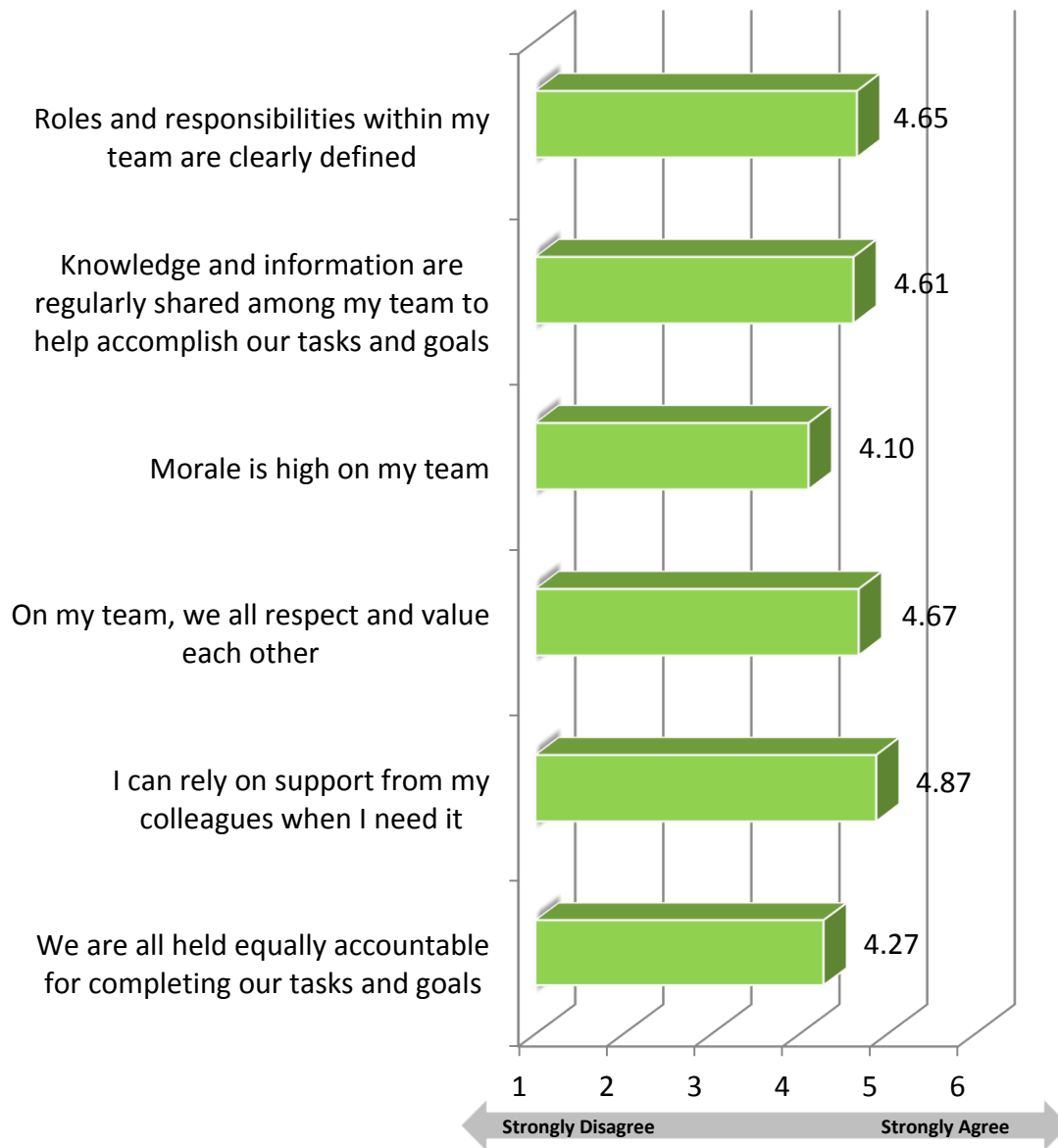
- More staff to compensate for the high workload, as well as higher pay given that employees haven't received a raise or COLA in a long time
- More utilization of technology and upgrades to the current technological resources available (e.g. updated computers)
- More training offerings (e.g. management training); increased availability for training classes that are already offered (some classes fill up too quickly, making it hard to take desired classes); and compensation (for time and expenses) from the County for any outside training taken to improve skills/knowledge

#### **What motivates you to go above and beyond in performing your job?**

- The people that we serve is a very rewarding aspect of the job; having a direct impact on people
- Being able to go the extra mile with a customer in getting them what they deserve; being able to make them feel good in a sometimes uncomfortable situation
- When I receive appreciation /praise for my work; when my opinions/ideas are listened to; feeling my manager trusts me; knowing there are fair opportunities for promotion; and fair compensation, especially given workload
- I am self-motivated

## My Team

Average: 4.53



### Results Summary

Regarding this category, employees feel they can rely on colleague support when needed and everyone respects and values each other. Within groups, it seems employees work well with each other. However, an area of improvement lies in the current state of morale within each team, as this was given the lowest rating.

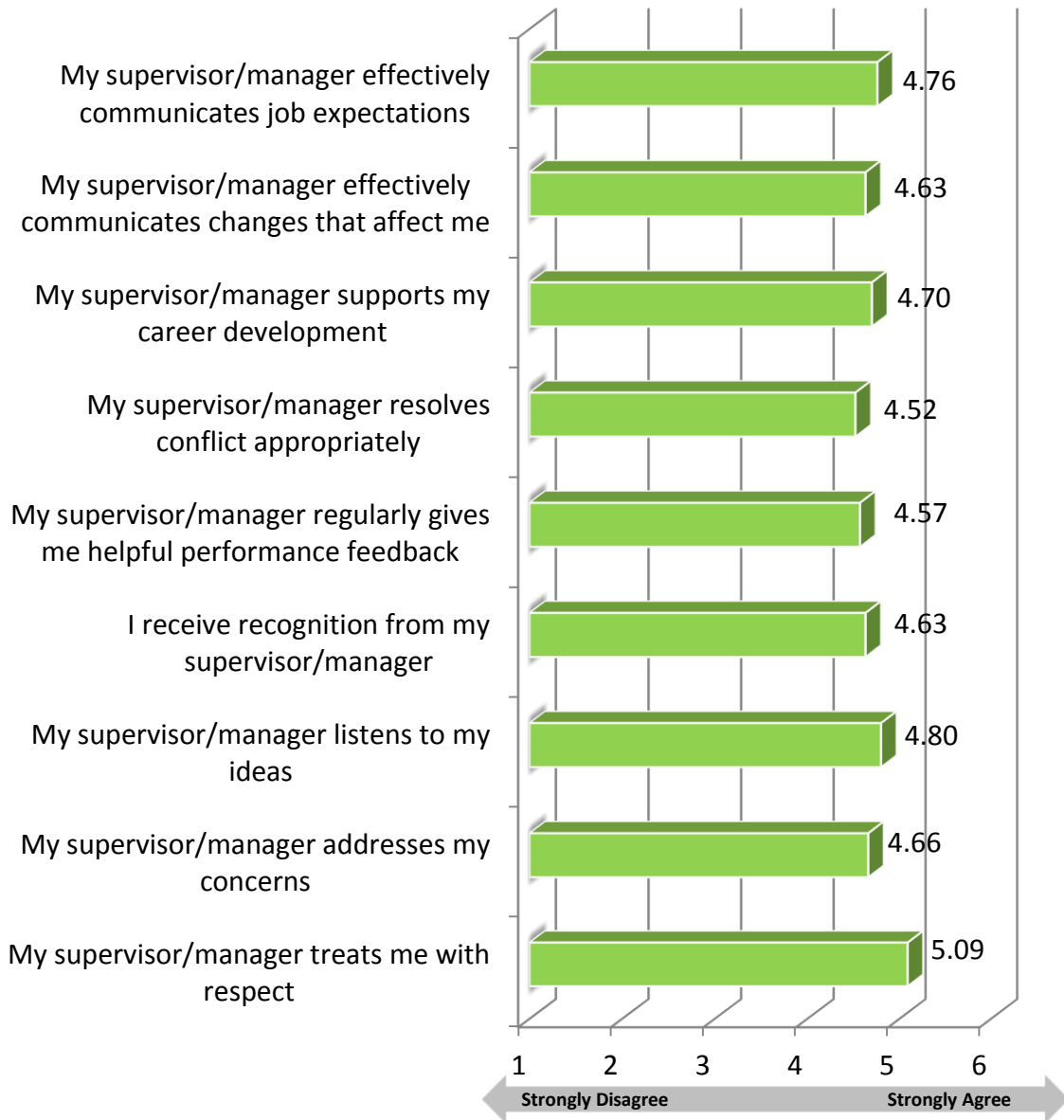
**My Team**  
**Open-ended Comment Themes**  
(Responses = 345; 23% of respondents left a comment)

**Additional Comments:**

- My team members are very supportive of each other; I love my team
- Management does not hold some team members accountable for completing their work; the hard workers get rewarded with more work; everyone is not treated the same
- Our workload is too high and the pay is not enough
- Lack of communication from management regarding changes that have taken place; there is a lot of confusion as a result and this has decreased morale on the team

## My Supervisor/Manager

Average: 4.71



### Results Summary

Overall, employees seem to be satisfied with their direct supervisor/manager and especially appreciate that they are being treated with respect and that their ideas are heard. Management should continue to build on this, as it makes a direct positive impact on engagement and satisfaction levels.

**My Supervisor/Manager**  
**Open-ended Comment Themes**

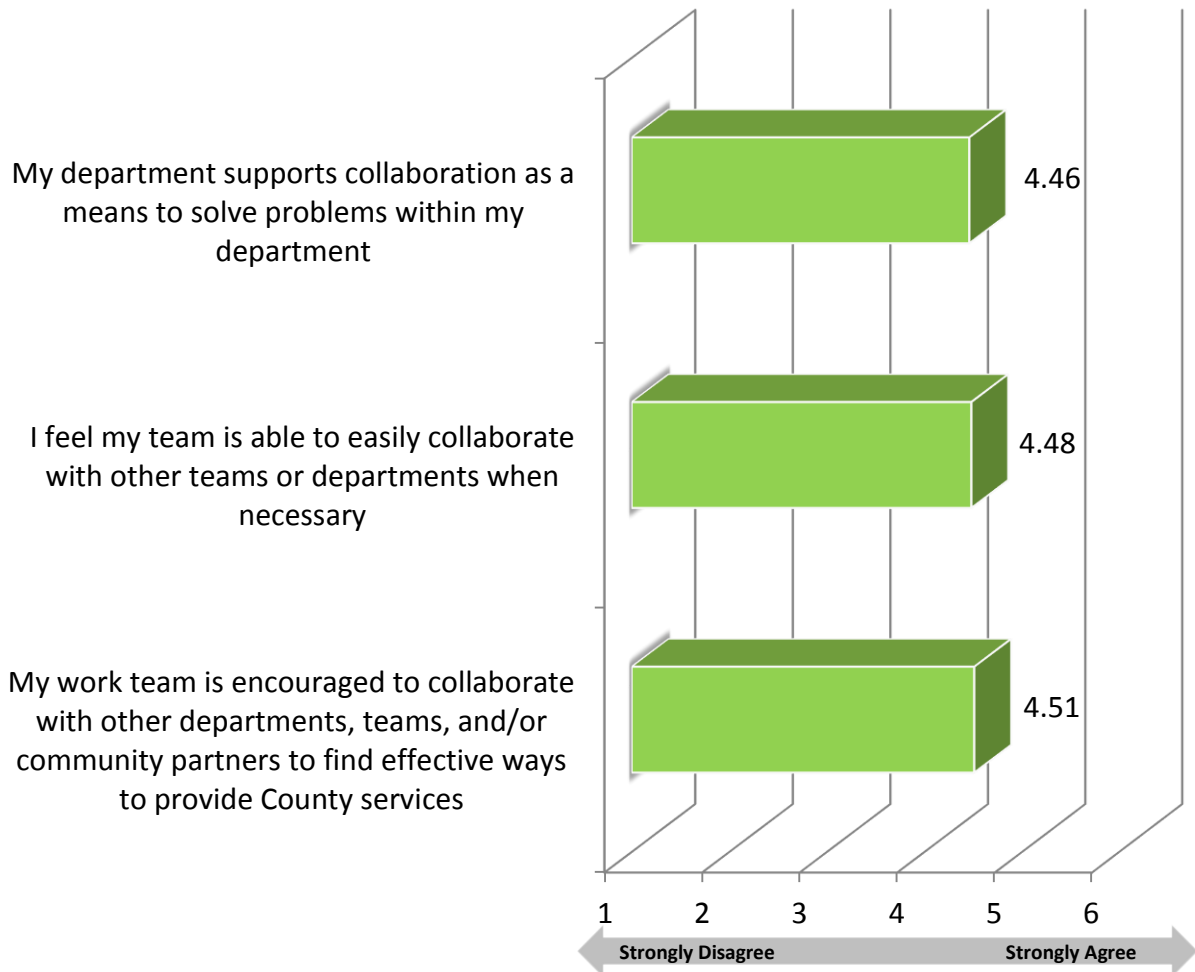
(Responses = 414; 27% of respondents left a comment)

**Additional comments that can assist in determining how to best support your supervisor/manager:**

- I have a great manager - listens and makes time for me; understanding; I feel valued and appreciated;
- My supervisor/manager is not always available to help us; I feel a lack of support; they do not know my job, so how can they help me if I have a question/concern?; and overall lack of communication regarding changes that are taking /have taken place
- My supervisor/manager is not empowered in his/her role; supervisor/manager needs more resources and leadership training to best help their direct reports
- My supervisor/manager does not take into account what I have to say; micro-management is present; not everyone is held accountable; he/she she is directive and not always considerate; I do not feel valued

## Collaboration Between Teams/Departments

Average: 4.48



### Results Summary

Although the ratings indicate that collaboration is supported within and between teams, the ratings on these questions are a bit lower than other categories. It would be beneficial to explore how collaboration efforts can be expanded to reduce duplication of efforts, provide exposure to and awareness of cross-departmental work, and potentially create better solutions for residents.

## **Collaboration Between Teams/Departments**

### **Open-ended Comment Themes**

(Responses = 186; 12% of respondents left a comment)

#### **Additional Comments:**

- There is not much opportunity for collaboration given how communication takes place between departments (e.g. only department leadership meets with each other, but this does not happen at the lower levels); not enough time for collaboration given everyone's high workload; departments and leadership poorly communicate concerning any changes that take place
- There is no collaboration; information only travels down the chain of command; collaboration is not supported by management or other departments; overall, the environment does not encourage it; disappointing results when it has occurred (e.g. some departments do not live up to their responsibility on the project, leading to less than desirable results)
- We do collaborate and do so effectively



## My Department's Leadership Team

Average: 4.35



### Results Summary

Employees have a clear understanding of their department's goals and values and believe the department values and delivers quality service. Given their understanding of the department's goals, this further supports why they have clarity regarding how their job contributes to the goals of the department. An effort to include employee opinions when making changes that affect them and ensuring they feel their best interests are considered will have a positive impact on employee morale as well as their overall perceptions of departmental leadership.

**My Department's Leadership Team****Open-ended Comment Themes**

(Responses = 998; 65% of respondents left a comment)

**Please explain why you feel morale is high in your department.**

Overall, the most frequent themes that emerged across departments were:

- Leadership is supportive; I feel appreciated and acknowledged for the work I do
- Leadership communicates openly and frequently
- My team is supportive; we have a strong sense of camaraderie
- People here are happy to come to work

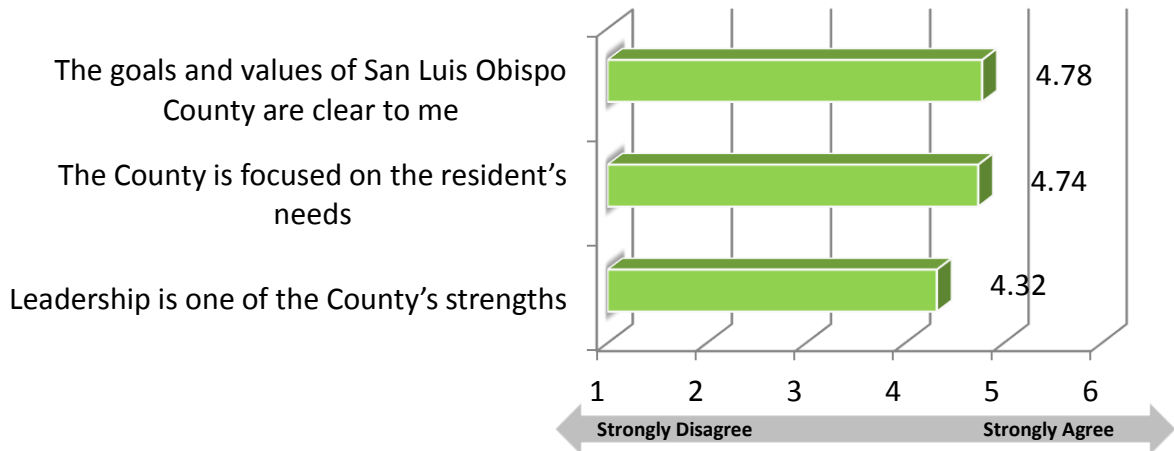
**Please explain why you feel morale is low in your department.**

Overall, the most frequent themes that emerged across departments were:

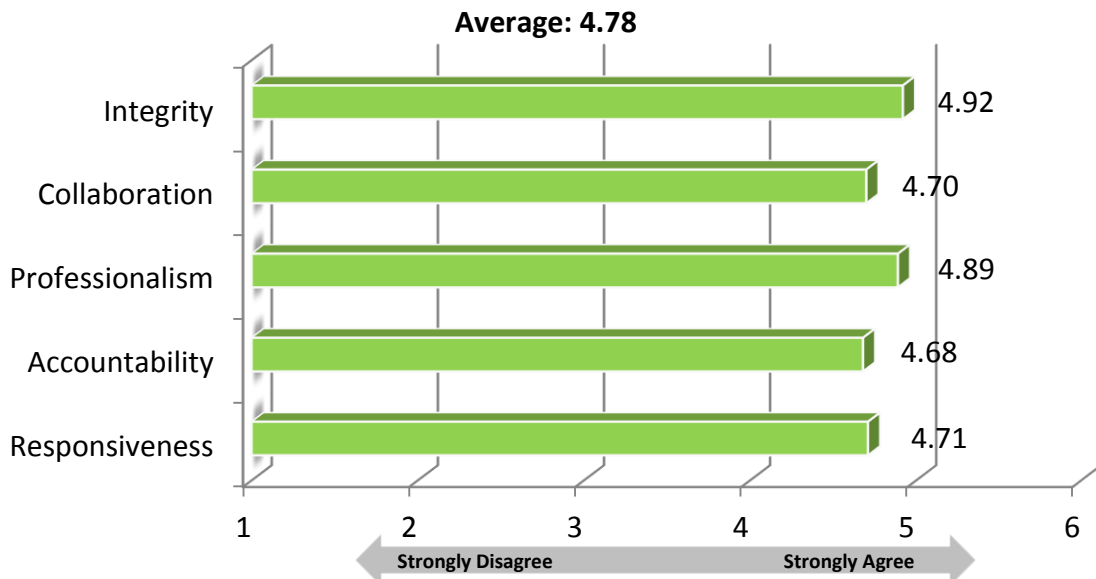
- Our workload has increased and we have fewer resources to support us
- There is a lack of clear communication from management regarding changes in the workplace
- Management shows a lack of appreciation for the work that we do; our input is not taken into consideration
- Trust in management is low
- Management does not hold itself accountable for its actions; it is unclear why some people are promoted and others are not

## County Leadership

**Average: 4.61**



The organizational values of San Luis Obispo County are regularly practiced in our work activities:



### Results Summary

Similar to department leadership, employees understand and recognize the goals and values of the County and feel it values the residents' needs. County leadership was rated higher than department leadership, but still lower in comparison to other items in the category.

**County Leadership**  
**Open-ended Comment Themes**

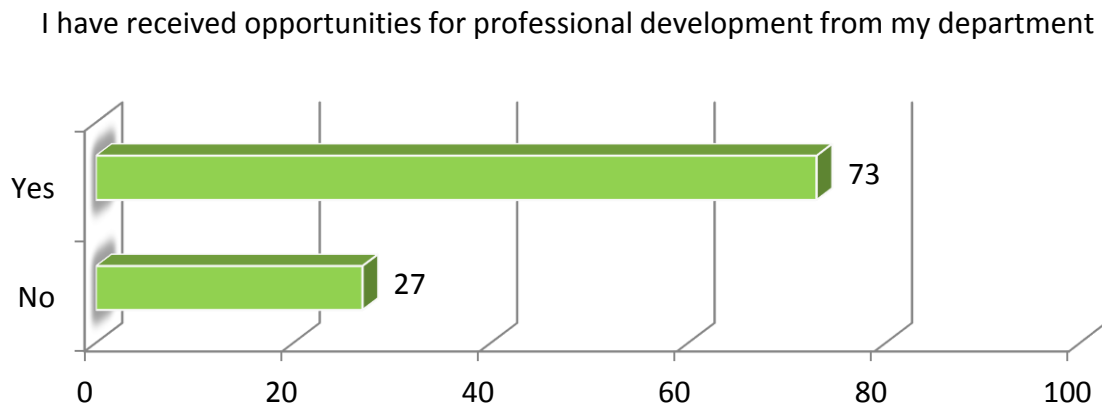
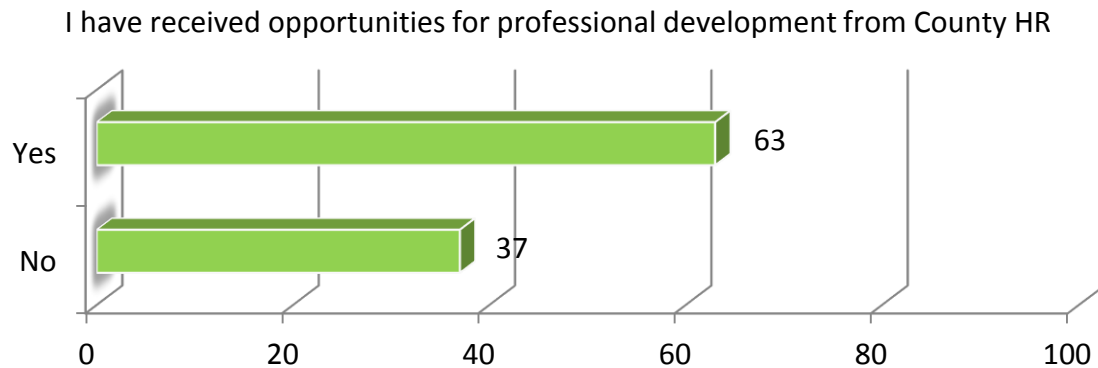
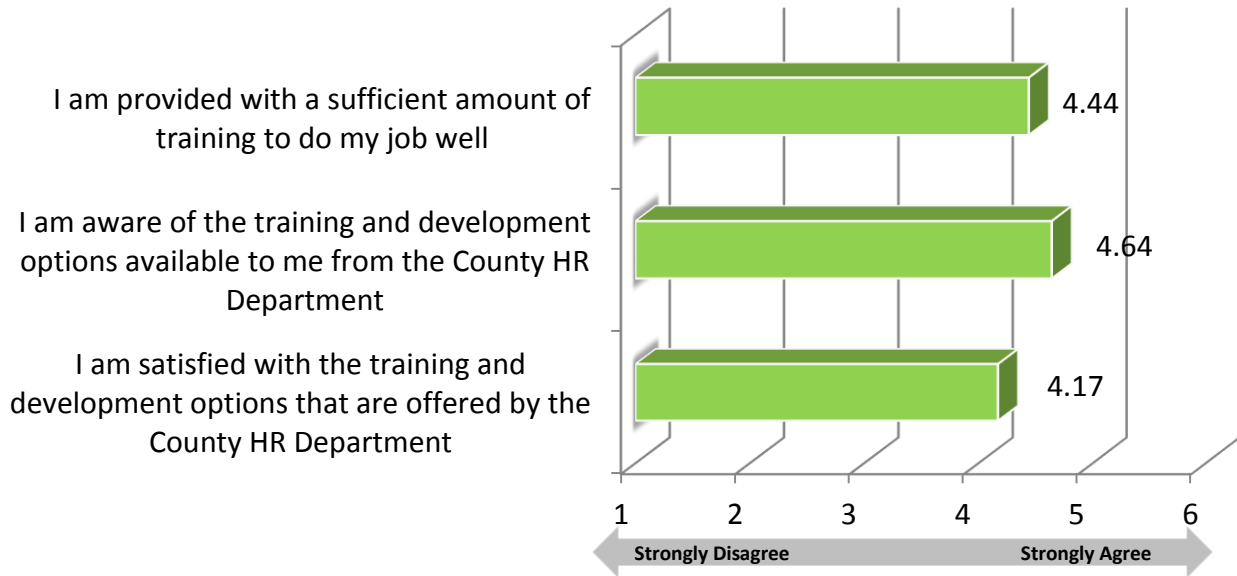
(Responses = 172; 11% of respondents left a comment)

**Additional Comments:**

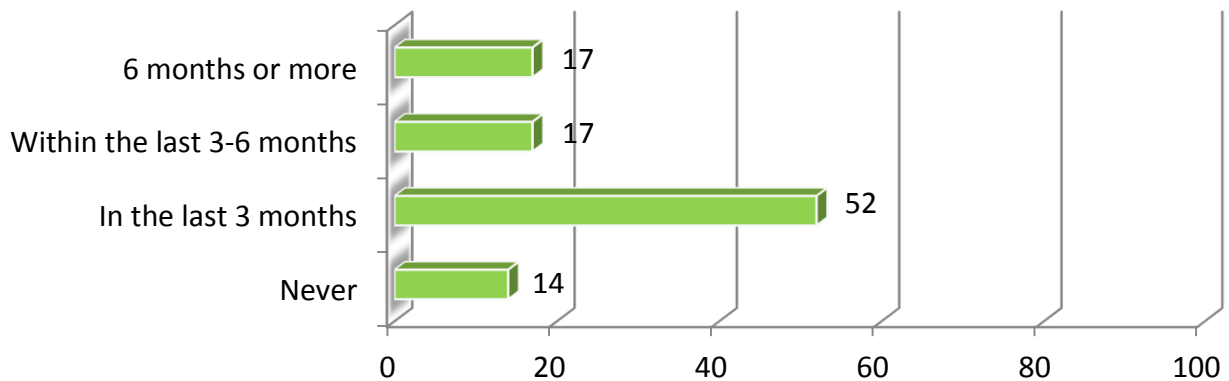
- The County is doing a good job; I have a positive outlook for the future leadership of the County; we should appreciate the County, rather than complain about it
- County leadership is not yet a strength and can be improved upon; leadership should lead by example and this example should trickle down to lower levels so that problems can actually get fixed; leadership does not always live up to standards of integrity, professionalism, and accountability
- Pay is low for non-management employees and should be raised; few advancement opportunities available for employees; the increasing workload has become harder to manage with fewer resources
- The County's priority should be resident needs

## Training, Resources & Support

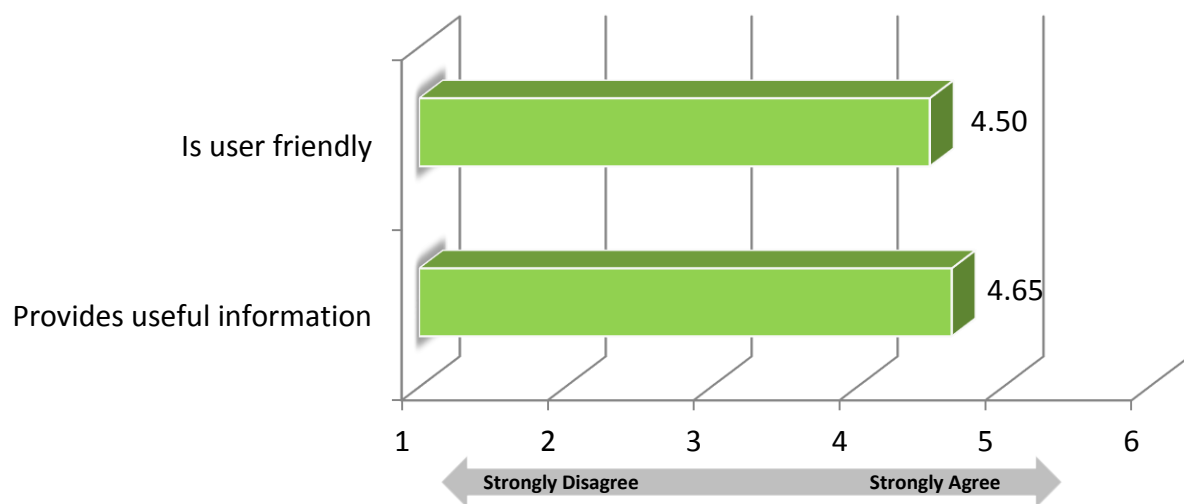
Average: 4.42



I have visited the County Human Resources internal web page (Employee University)



Please rate the HR internal web page (Employee University) on the following:  
(Responses = 1,079)



### Results Summary

Questions in the Training, Resources, and Support category received lower ratings than questions in other categories. Generally, employees are aware of development options available through HR but have received more professional development opportunities from their departments than from Countywide HR. Satisfaction with training is slightly lower than other ratings. Employees desire job specific training and the time and resources to take these types of trainings (open-ended comments go into further detail). With regard to the Employee University web page, those that have visited it generally describe it as user friendly and useful in providing information.

### **Training, Resources & Support Open-ended Comment Themes**

(Responses = 891, 58% of respondents left a comment)

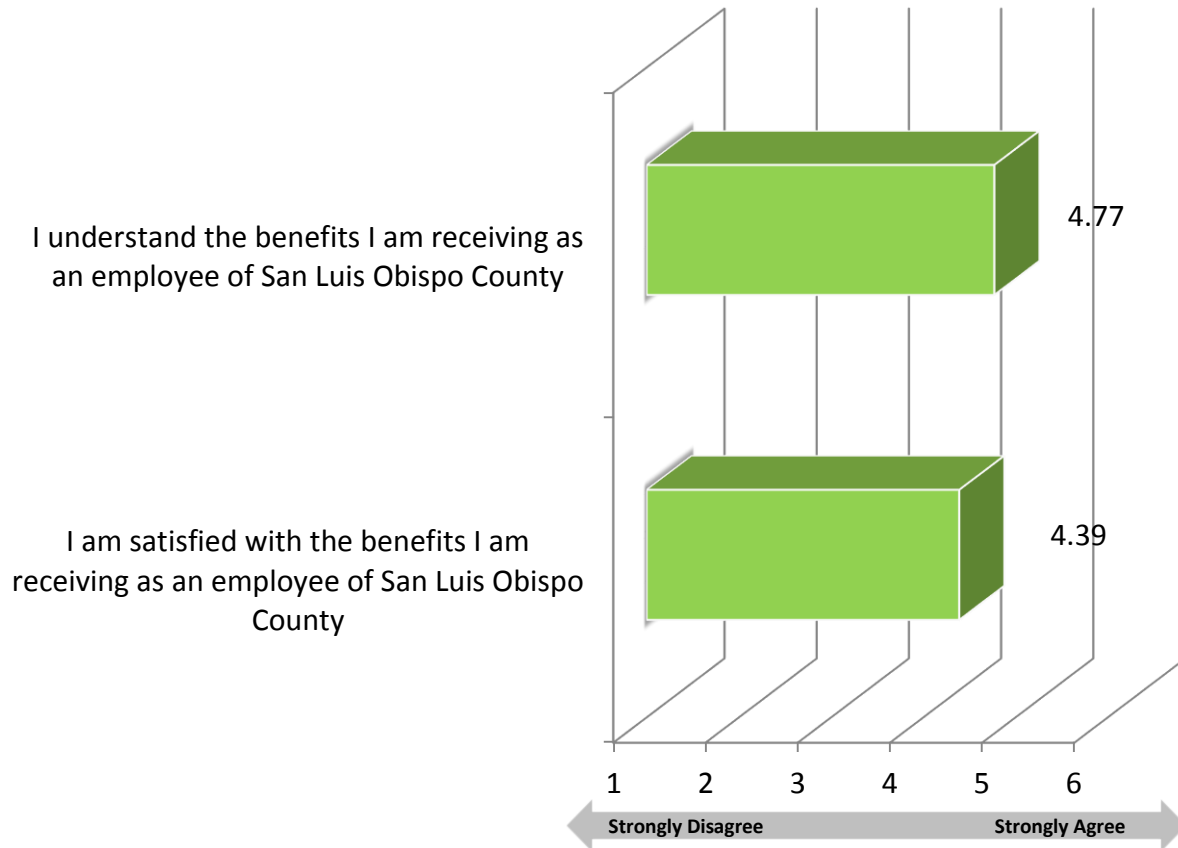
**Of the professional development opportunities you have taken advantage of, which were the most impactful to you that others may also benefit from? What additional opportunities for your professional development do you feel would help you to be successful?**

Overall, the most frequent themes that emerged across departments were:

- More offerings for leadership/management training and computer classes
  - The computer classes offered fill up too fast, so we would like more opportunities available for us to attend
- Not being able to get the time off from work and no monetary compensation are major factors preventing employees from attending trainings; some of the more specific trainings that would be useful for our department were attended on our own time, with our own money; County support on this front would be appreciated – it is often unclear as to what training/reimbursement options are available

## Benefits/Compensation

Average: 4.58



### Results Summary

Ratings showed that generally employees understand their benefits and are somewhat satisfied with them. As comments revealed, even those that may be satisfied with the benefits are not necessarily happy with the amount of compensation they are currently receiving.



**Benefits/Compensation**  
**Open-ended Comment Themes**

(Responses = 420; 27% of respondents left a comment)

**If any, what benefits not currently offered are you interested in receiving?**

- Affordable health care; more coverage; what is offered currently is too expensive; more options would be nice (gym memberships, monthly stipends to be used specifically for wellness); better life insurance; insurance after retirement
- A pay raise to compensate for cost of living– what I’m getting paid is not comparable to other counties; I haven’t gotten a pay raise in a long time; desired flex time; more pay for bilingual speakers
- More vacation time
- Increased tuition reimbursement/educational benefits
- I need a better understanding of our offered benefits
- County should provide matching funds for investment in my 401(k)
- Telecommuting benefits should be offered

## Your Work Environment

Average: 4.78



### Results Summary

Results indicate that employees are very satisfied with their work environment, giving safety and security one of the higher, and most important, ratings in the category. Ergonomics is an area for improvement, as this was given a lower rating in comparison to the other items. Comments revealed a need for assistance with security and response to threats.

**Your Work Environment**  
**Open-ended Comment Themes**

(Responses = 276; 19% of respondents left a comment)

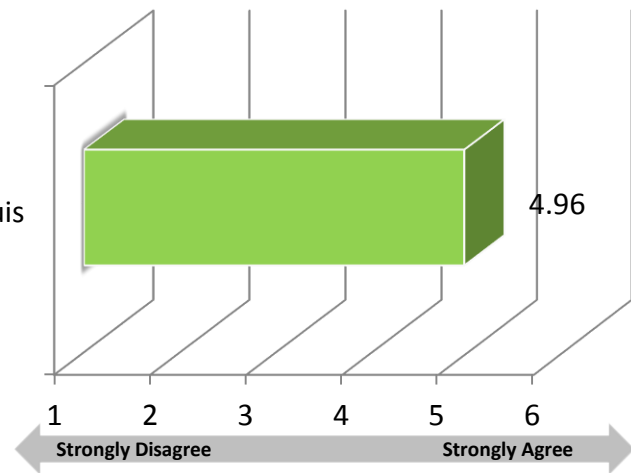
**Additional Comments:**

- Environment/Security should be considered for each work area to ensure employees are safe from potential public-facing threats
- Ergo checks take too long to happen, but when they do, sometimes they are beneficial and other times, those performing the checks are not very qualified to do so
- Not enough space; little privacy due to small workspace and set-up of it
- Ergo-friendly office furniture (e.g. chairs, standing desks) and tools needed; updated furniture needed
- Air quality leaves much to be desired; temperature is not well regulated in buildings (gets too hot or too cold)
- Poor lighting
- Overall work environment is dirty

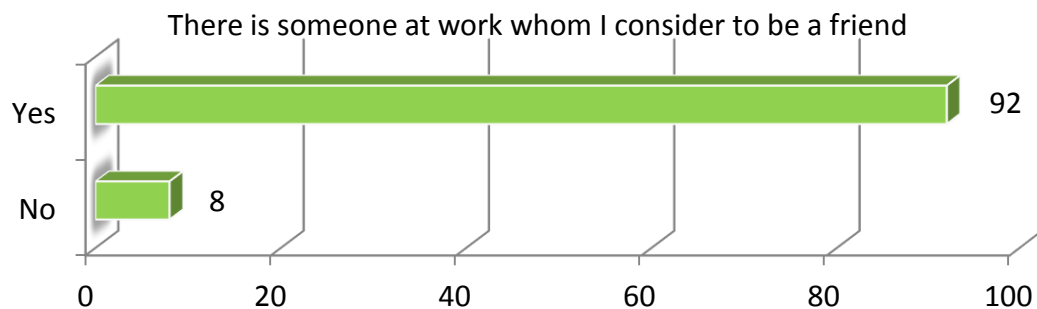
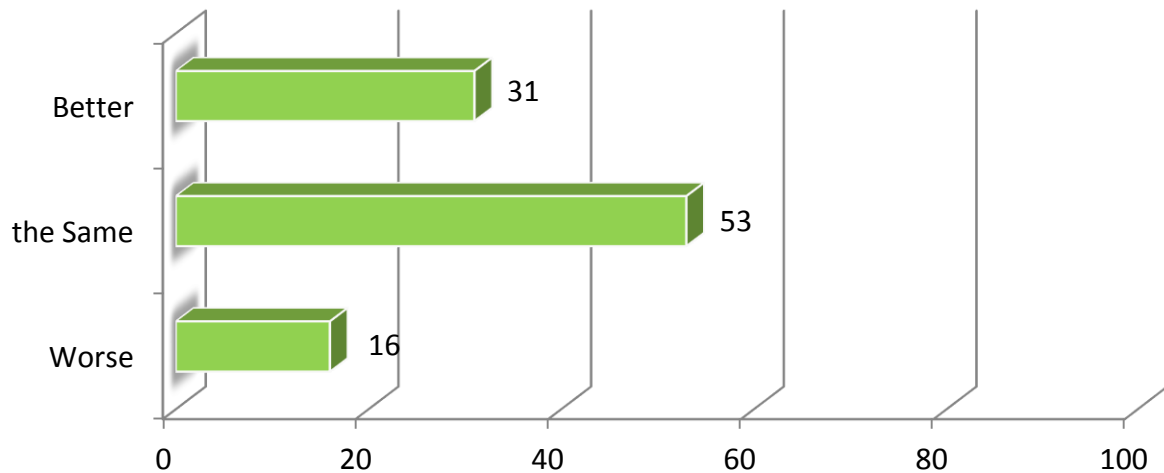
## Overall Satisfaction

Average: 4.96

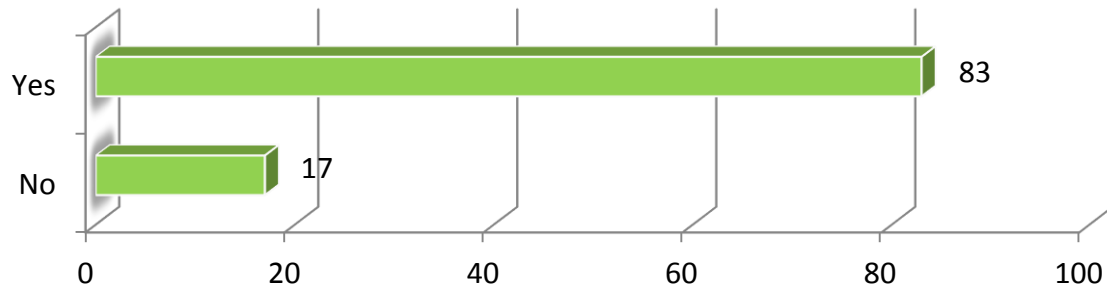
Overall, I am satisfied with my job at San Luis Obispo County



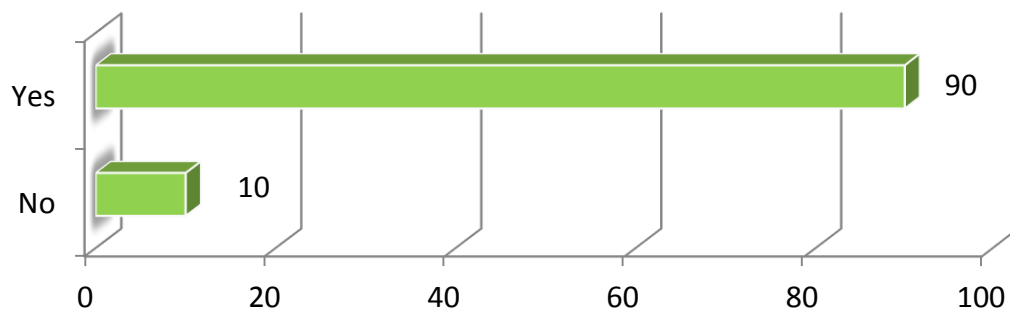
My job satisfaction is better, the same, or worse than it was 6 months ago



I would prefer to remain with the organization even if I received a comparable job offer elsewhere



I would recommend working at San Luis Obispo County to a friend



### Results Summary

Ratings show employee satisfaction levels are high for the County. While the majority rated their job satisfaction as similar to 6 months ago, the minority felt their satisfaction decreased. Research has shown one of the strongest indicators of employee engagement is whether they have someone at work whom they consider to be a friend. By and large survey participants consider someone at work to be a friend. Also on a positive note, a large majority would choose to remain at the County even if offered another job elsewhere and would even go the extent of recommending the County to a friend as a place to work. This category is very telling in that employees think highly of the County and want to be a part of its success. As such, their feedback should be interpreted as positive and constructive.

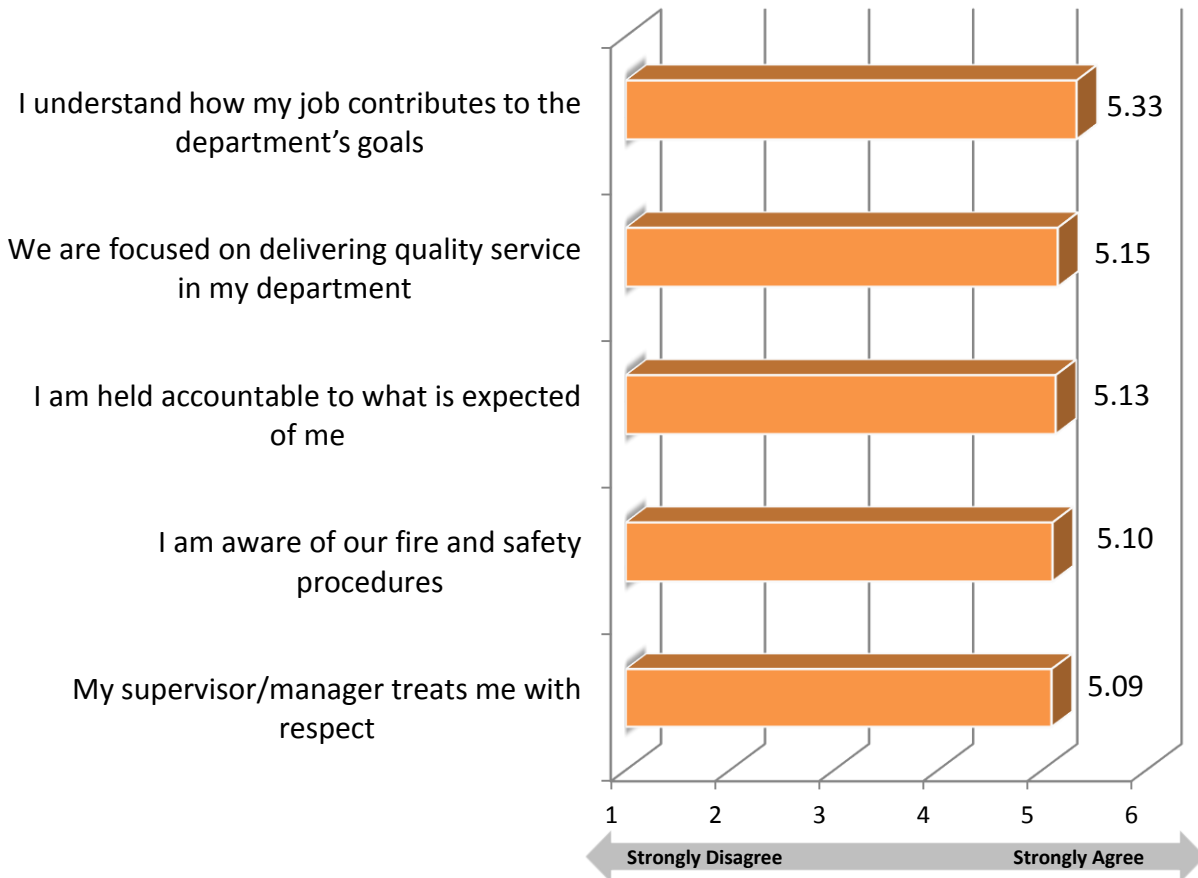
**Overall Ending Comments**  
**Open-ended Comment Themes**

(Responses = 280; 18% of respondents left a comment)

**Please share any additional comments, thoughts, or suggestions than can help Human Resources support you and/or your Department:**

- Thank you for gathering our feedback! We hope you listen to it; even small changes are very appreciated; we like working here
- Pay raises, workload and additional staff need to be addressed
- Do not micromanage us; real leadership is needed; focus more on taking care of us and less on productivity; we need to feel appreciated
- Please provide the additional training/opportunities that will help us grow in our jobs and prepare us for promotions; management training would be nice; re-evaluate the promotion process for its fairness

### Top 5 Highest Rated Questions Overall



#### Results Summary

The biggest compliments to the organization are revealed in the above results. Of the high scoring questions, "I understand how my job contributes to the department's goals" is rated the highest. It appears that employees recognize the importance of their jobs and the work they do and feel it contributes to the overall success of the department. They are focused on delivering quality service to the residents. No matter what the ups and downs of their jobs are, the employees' priority concern is the residents they serve.

## Bottom 5 Lowest Rated Questions Overall



### Results Summary

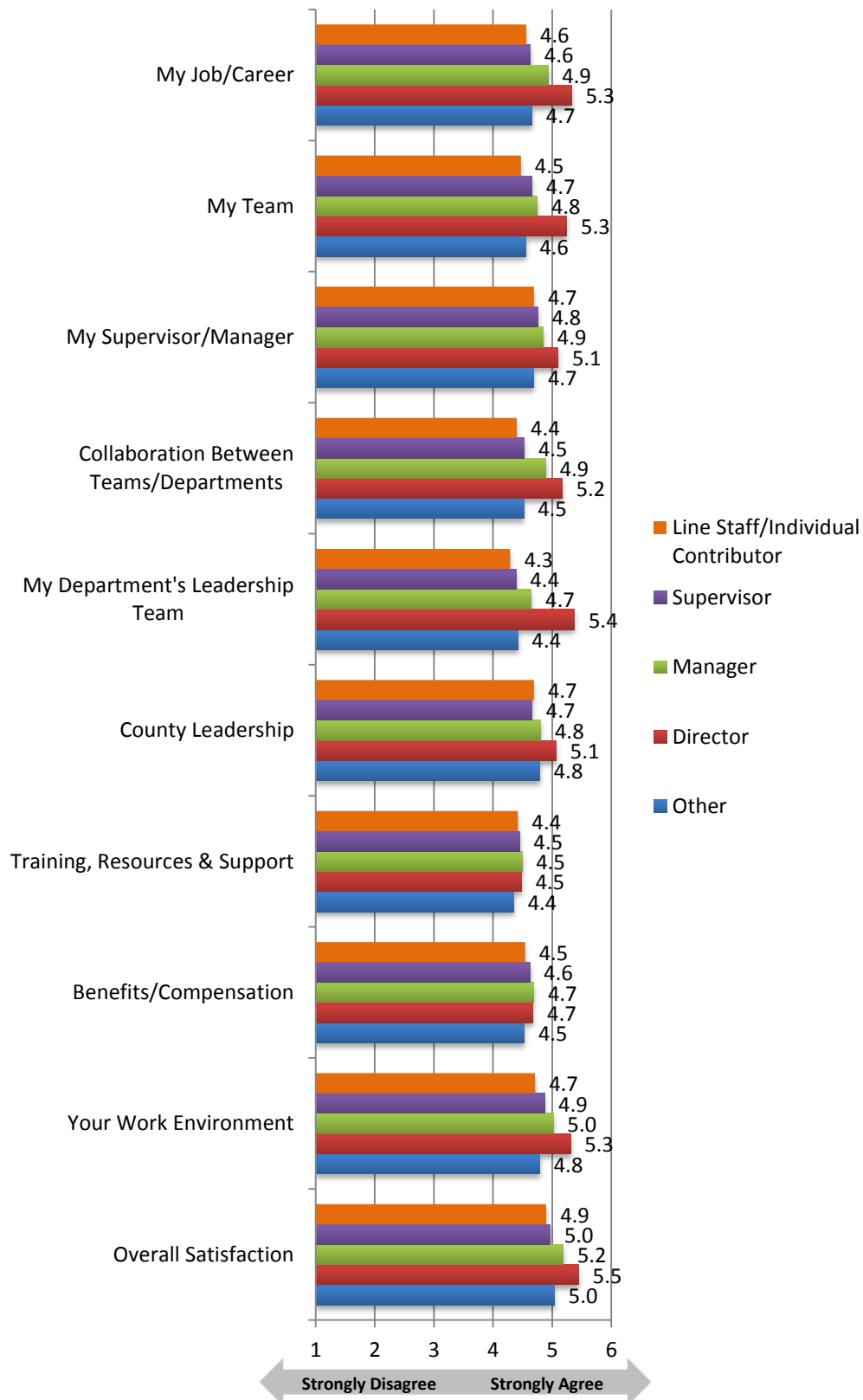
These questions shed light on opportunities that can enhance the work life and overall contributions of the organization. Key takeaways from these ratings are that employees feel morale is lacking in their department, do not feel that leadership is a department strength, and would like their opinions to be considered during change that directly affects them. Overall, there are key opportunities to leverage employee knowledge and opinions in finding solutions and making adjustments to improve processes and services.



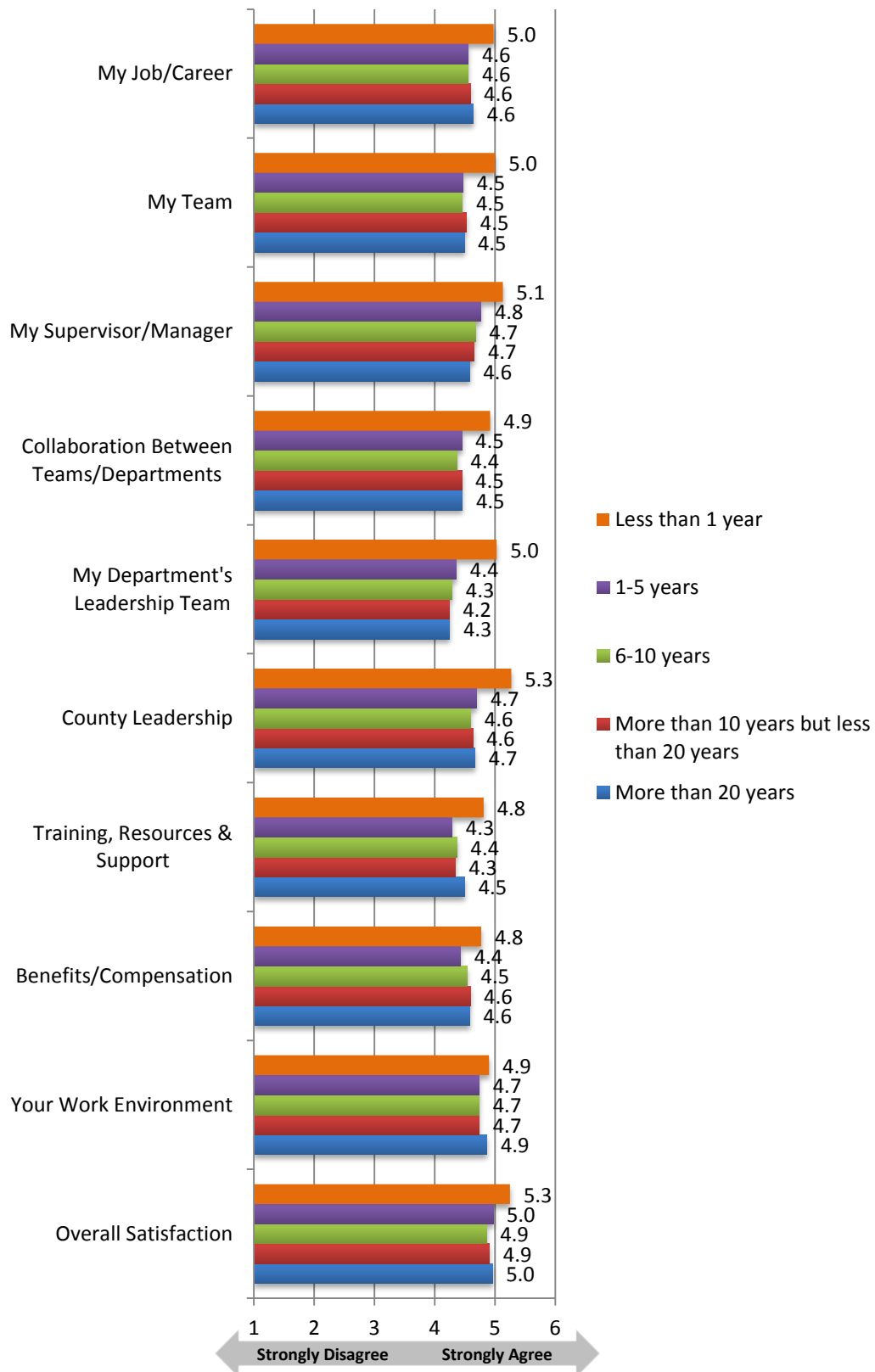
## Category Ratings by Department

	Overall Satisfaction	Your Work Environment	Benefits/ Compensation	Training, Resources & Support	County Leadership	My Department's Leadership Team	Collaboration Between Teams/ Departments	My Supervisor/ Manager	My Team	My Job/ Career
County Administrative Office/Emergency Services	5.3	<b>5.5</b>	<b>5.4</b>	4.5	5.0	4.8	4.8	4.7	4.6	<b>5.2</b>
Agricultural Commissioner/Weights and Measures	5.1	5.1	4.8	4.8	5.0	4.8	4.6	4.8	4.7	4.9
Assessor's Office	4.9	4.8	4.6	4.4	4.7	4.3	4.5	4.6	4.4	4.7
Auditor-Controller – Treasurer-Tax Collector – Public Administrator	5.2	5.2	5.0	4.7	<b>5.2</b>	5.0	5.1	5.0	5.0	4.9
Child Support Services	4.9	5.2	4.9	4.8	5.0	4.7	4.7	4.7	4.8	5.0
Clerk-Recorder	4.9	4.9	4.3	4.3	4.9	4.9	4.7	4.4	4.6	4.7
County Counsel	<b>5.3</b>	5.3	4.9	<b>5.2</b>	5.1	4.9	5.0	<b>5.3</b>	5.0	5.1
District Attorney	5.1	4.9	4.4	4.6	4.6	4.2	4.5	5.0	4.8	4.8
Farm Advisor	4.0	4.9	5.0	4.3	5.0	<b>5.0</b>	<b>5.2</b>	5.1	4.8	4.8
General Services Agency	4.8	4.7	4.4	4.2	4.6	4.1	4.3	4.7	4.4	4.4
Health Agency	5.0	4.7	4.5	4.3	4.7	4.4	4.4	4.8	4.5	4.6
Human Resources and Risk Management	5.3	5.3	4.9	4.6	5.1	4.9	4.9	5.0	<b>5.1</b>	5.0
Library Services	5.1	4.5	4.6	4.2	4.7	4.4	4.2	5.0	4.7	4.5
Planning and Building	4.9	4.6	4.4	4.2	4.7	4.2	4.6	4.4	4.6	4.5
Probation	5.0	4.8	4.5	4.7	4.7	4.5	4.6	4.8	4.6	4.8
Public Works	4.9	4.9	4.7	4.5	4.8	4.5	4.5	4.7	4.4	4.7
Sheriff- Coroner	4.9	4.5	4.4	4.1	4.7	4.3	4.3	4.5	4.4	4.6
Social Services	5.0	4.8	4.6	4.6	4.6	4.2	4.5	4.8	4.6	4.7

## Category Ratings by Position



## Category Ratings by Tenure



## Category Ratings by Likelihood to Retire

